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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 001209

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TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MZ](#)  
SUBJECT: TURMOIL IN MOZAMBIQUE'S POLICE FORCE

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Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Elizabeth Raspolic for Reasons 1.5 (b/d  
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11. (C) Summary: In the latest in a string of shootings, on September 4 two riot policemen moonlighting as bodyguards were gunned down by other police while sitting in a car. Minister of Interior Pacheco first said the two were wanted criminals and then the next day admitted that they were riot policemen, but claimed that they were criminals who had "infiltrated" the police force. Since then the government has fallen silent on matter, with no explanation for why the shooting occurred and no announcement of an investigation. The September 4 killings are merely the latest in a string of shootings involving police. In mid-August, possibly in reaction to the increasing violence, President Guebuza replaced the head of the police and the chief of the presidential security detail. And in the past ten days Minister Pacheco transferred to the provinces a number of senior police commanders stationed in Maputo. The shootings and personnel changes underscore that Mozambique's police force is in turmoil, that officers have links to organized crime, and that Minister Pacheco by no means has full control. End Summary.

12. (C) On September 4, while entering a gas station in a vehicle in the middle of the afternoon, two riot policemen and the civilian driver of the car were gunned down by policemen in an apparent ambush in a Maputo suburb. Minister of Interior Pacheco went on TV later that day to say that the victims were well-known common criminals. The next day he corrected himself, admitting that two of the dead were riot policemen, but adding that they were criminals who had "infiltrated" the police force. However, reporters from the private TV station STV later in the week uncovered more details (and the government-owned newspaper, Noticias, carried the STV account on September 8). According to STV, the two policemen were off-duty and serving as bodyguards for the car driver, a businessman who had a large sum of money in the car and was en route to the frontier with Swaziland to transfer it out of the country. (It is common for businessmen to hire off-duty police in such situations.) The car was ambushed by other policemen. An eyewitness told STV he saw police, after they had fired into the vehicle, open the trunk and remove a large bag, and then drive off. Other police afterwards appeared and stood guard around the bullet-riddled vehicle and bodies in it. According to the press, the killers had initially been approached by the businessman to serve as bodyguards but had asked for too much money. (Note - As it appears that the killers' identities

are known, it is not clear why they have not been arrested.  
End note.)

¶3. (U) The September 4 shooting is the latest in a string of violent incidents involving the police. On July 7 one of the leaders of the elite "Mambas Brigade" anti-crime unit, senior police commander Isaias Chavane, was gunned down along with two others in broad daylight at a snack bar. One week later, on July 14, Helder Bento Machava, a member of the gang that shot Chavane, was killed during a shoot-out between the police and other gang members after he led police to their hideout; the other gang members managed to escape. On August 10 police fatally wounded another wanted criminal, who died in the hospital later that day. And on August 22 two members of the Mambas Brigade were seriously injured in a drive-by shooting in the evening in central Maputo.

¶4. (U) On August 14 President Guebuza replaced the national commander of the police force and the head of the Casa Militar (the presidential guard). Custodio Pinto, the new national police commander, in his remarks during the ceremony acknowledged the high crime rate in the country. Subsequently, he told the press that the police force had been "infiltrated by criminal elements." The press has described the appointment of Pinto, who was a colonel in charge of the anti-aircraft unit of the armed forces, as a sign of the militarization of the police. Further replacements were made on September 12, when Interior Minister Pacheco announced new postings for 22 senior police commanders. Several senior police officials in Maputo city, including the head of the city police force, were transferred to the provinces. The Maputo city police chief was ordered off to Lichinga, the capital of poor Niassa province, in Mozambique's remote north.

¶5. (C) Comment: The Ministry of Interior is commonly believed to be a swamp of intrigue and corruption, with

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police seen as the most corrupt of all government officials by ordinary citizens, according to a survey in 2004. Since being made Minister in February 2005, Pacheco has been trying to clean it up, a very difficult task. Late last year Pacheco announced that he had uncovered 55 "ghost employees" on the Interior Ministry's rolls, along with the disappearance of \$8 million in Interior Ministry funds during the tenure of his predecessor. His reformist efforts are thought to be thwarted by powerful former army officers in the Ministry and in the police who are able to run their offices as they see fit. Pacheco's authority is further undermined by the fact that the national police commander is chosen by the president (as is the head of the presidential security detail), and so not answerable to him.

¶6. (C) Comment Continued: The killing of the Mambas commander apparently was over business deals - his links to organized crime were an open secret in Maputo. By transferring to the provinces senior police commanders, Pacheco may be acting to break up other suspected crime rings and get key individuals out of Maputo to less visible posts. (Note: When President Guebuza appointed Custodio Pinto to the job of national police chief, he gave Pinto the mandate to "purge" suspected "criminal elements." It is likely that Pinto is taking the lead in identifying those to be transferred. Officials in Mozambique are customarily disciplined through transfers rather than outright dismissals. End note.) In this context, contacts have speculated that the September 4 police killing and some other shootings may be efforts by Interior ministry and police officers to eliminate possible informants, before Pacheco's men can use them to root out the corrupt. Pacheco may have to tread carefully, despite being one of only a handful of ministers on the powerful 15-member Frelimo Political Commission.  
Raspolic